

# Kent County Report

## Commissioners Approve Agreement with Tourism Marketing Group



Kent County continues to see robust tourism and conventioners from around the globe. This success led the Kent County Board of Commissioners to approve a five year agreement with **Experience Grand Rapids** to continue its efforts to market our community.

The County receives a 5 percent tax on hotel and motel occupancies, called the Lodging Excise Tax.

The Lodging Excise Tax helps fund debt service for DeVos Place, contributions to Experience Grand Rapids, a modest contribution to Festival for marketing, and related administrative costs.

Under its current agreement, the County contributes 16.75 percent of lodging receipts to **Experience Grand Rapids** for marketing services. The new agreement provides for the County to pay **Experience Grand Rapids** between 17 percent and 18 percent of lodging receipts, based on certain financial benchmarks, over the next five years.

"The past five years have seen very solid growth in Lodging Excise Tax receipts," said Dan Koorndyk, Chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners. "We believe that an annual 4 to 5 percent increase in receipts during the next several years is a reasonable expectation. As a result, we can continue to meet our obligations and also increase our commitment to market the community through our partnership with **Experience Grand Rapids**."

"The County understands our mission and the benefit of tourism related revenues to the community," said Doug Small, President and CEO of **Experience Grand Rapids**. "It has had the confidence in our efforts to continue to provide funding for marketing programs and participate as collaborative partners to make a great destination even better." The county estimates collecting \$9 million in Lodging Excise taxes in 2016.



## Help Wanted!

Do you want to work for more than a paycheck?

Kent County serves residents from birth records to immunizations, from public safety to property records, and much more.

Check out jobs that are open today, or create a profile to be notified when a job of interest becomes available.

Check out:  
**[accessKent.com/jobs](http://accessKent.com/jobs)**



## Partnership Saves Critical Program

The Kent County Public Guardianship program for adults in Kent County services about 900 people; 383 of those serviced in the past year are labeled “indigent,” unable to pay the fees of a guardian. Recently, DHHS determined that funding for the one Adult Protective Services worker that performed the duties of the Guardian Monitor is no longer available. Concerns that the program would be unsustainable and could not accept additional guardianship cases caused Kent County to do one of the things it does best – create a public/private partnership with two major hospital systems to keep services intact and growing. In September, the Board of Commissioners approved this partnership.



Spectrum Health and Mercy Health St. Mary’s each agreed to provide \$50,000 annually for the next three years to Kent County to support the Guardianship Program. “The DHHS cuts would leave these vulnerable adults with no one to care for them. This could have led to tragic outcomes,” said Daryl Delabbio, Kent County Administrator/Controller. “Over the past year, county staff from Probate Court and my office looked at a tough situation and found a sound resolution with great partners: Mercy Health Saint Mary’s, Spectrum Health and the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan. There is no other program like this in the State of Michigan.”

The unanimous vote was applauded by Probate Court Judge David Murkowski. “We had a lot of good people come together and collaborate on this,” Judge Murkowski told the Board after the vote. “This action makes me proud to live in Kent County.”

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## Feds Award Funding to Find Housing for Veterans



The Kent County Housing Commission was awarded a \$87,360 for “Extraordinary Administrative Fees” to support the Department of Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) related activities. This program has been helping veterans experiencing homelessness and their families with support to obtain housing by combining rental assistance vouchers from HUD, with case management and clinical services provided by Veterans Affairs. The funding will be used to support hiring

temporary staff to serve as a Portability Coordinator for HUD-VASH clients (to focus more time and energy on efficiently processing requests). In the letter from HUD, the department noted, “We are moving the needle towards achieving our goal of ending veteran homelessness, thanks to your (the Kent County Housing Commission’s) innovative approaches and direct efforts to quickly move veterans into stable housing.” Since 2013, the Housing Commission has helped 153 veterans experiencing homelessness through the VASH program.



## The Grand Strategy Application Filed

Kent County, the City of Grand Rapids, Downtown Grand Rapids Inc., and several other local units of government submitted plans through the Michigan Department of Economic Development (MEDC) to develop **The Grand Strategy**. These innovative resiliency plans and projects are designed to make the region strong enough to withstand disasters. Objectives include:

- Converting multiple riverfront opportunity sites from a gray-to-green flood protection system that expands public parks, trails and recreation opportunities.
- Remove five obsolete dams and restore the rapids in the Grand River in Downtown GR.
- Ensuring that Grand Rapids' urban core secures "sound reach" flood protection designation by the Federal Emergency Management Association.

"This is the largest grant Kent County has ever requested," said Dan Koorndyk, Chair of the Board of Commissioners. "If we obtain funding through HUD, it could truly transform our County and help ensure our entire region could bounce back quickly from a natural disaster such as flooding."

The National Disaster Resiliency Grant competition is operated through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Grant winners will be announced in the first quarter of 2016.



*Flooding in Grand Rapids near the Blue Bridge on April 22, 2013.*



*Shelter Staff accepting the award on October 19, 2015.*

## Kent County Wins Shelter of the Year

Congratulations to the Kent County Animal Shelter for being this year's recipient of the Michigan Association of Animal Control Officer's **Shelter of the Year** Award. This is a great honor and recognizes the efforts of the Animal Shelter staff and their work creating a "warm and humane place filled with great animals and welcoming people." Shelter staff plan to hold a holiday adoption special starting later this month. [Click here for details.](#)

## 2016 Budget Vote Scheduled

The Kent County Board of Commissioners will vote on the 2016 budget on November 19, 2015 during their 8:30 a.m. meeting. This year, the general budget is just over \$165 million, a slight increase of 3.4 percent from the previous year. The budget is balanced and does not require dipping into General Fund Reserves. "The County continues to manage how we are growing out of the toughest economic times we have faced," said Daryl Delabbio, County Administrator. "Any additional resources should be used to improve our physical and information technology infrastructure, and reduce legacy costs."





## Kent/MSU Extension Offers Recordkeeping Tools

We all do it: put important papers in a box or large pile, planning to organize them later. When "later" comes, we frantically look for that important document, and wonder why we didn't organize things better!

In an emergency, getting to important documents may be critical for your family. The Kent County/ Michigan State University Extension has some great resources for your family.

[Click here for more.](#)

## "Spotlight" for Community Efforts

Recently, the Kent School Services Network (KSSN) recognized Assistant County Administrator Wayman Britt in the **KSSN Spotlight**. Wayman oversees the Health Department, Community Development and Housing, Veterans Services, and serves as liaison for the State Department of Health & Human Services.

[You can read more here.](#)



Kent School Services Network

[ABOUT KSSN](#)

[MAKING A DIFFERENCE](#)

### KSSN Spotlight

KSSN Spotlight is a showcase of one of our dedicated partners or staff members who work tirelessly on behalf of children and families. This month, we are spotlighting Wayman Britt, Co-President for the KSSN Board of Directors, and Assistant Administrator for Kent County.



## Small Farms, Co-ops Eligible for Fed Loans

Federal loans may be available to small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, small businesses engaged in aquaculture and nonprofit organizations in Kent County through the Small Business Administration (SBA). Excessive snow, freeze and extremely cold temperatures from January 1 through June 3, 2015 made several Michigan counties eligible for the SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program. Applicants may apply online using the Electronic Loan Application (ELA) via [SBA's secure website here](#) or you can call 800-659-2955 (800-877-8339 for the deaf and hard-of-hearing). Loan applications must be returned to SBA no later than June 14, 2016.

## Kent County Board of Commissioners & Administrator's Office

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## Kent County Mission Statement

The mission of Kent County government is to be an effective and efficient steward in delivering quality services for our diverse community. Our priority is to provide mandated services, which may be enhanced and supplemented by additional services to improve the quality of life for all our citizens within the constraints of sound fiscal policy.